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The Los Angeles Community College District Congratulates Students on Successful Advocacy for Fareless Public-Transit Program

LOS ANGELES—The Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) congratulates its student advocates on their remarkable achievement, winning the recommendation of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro) staff for its recommendation to their Board of Directors to implement the student transit pass pilot program for the 2021-22 fiscal year. As part of this program, all of Los Angeles County community college students would receive a completely fareless transit on rail and buses operated by Metro, from August 1, 2021 through June 30, 2023. This student pilot is a part of the Fareless System Initiative Pilot Program being considered by LA Metro. The twenty-one community colleges in Los Angeles County enroll approximately 500,000 students annually.

“This is an important milestone and major hurdle for the pilot program to cross, and our eloquent and passionate community college students made the difference in getting this done. Leadership is demonstrated at times like this, and we could not be prouder of our students for this significant victory for education and transportation equity,” said LACCD Board President Steven F. Veres. “This pilot program will bolster the economic recovery of our region, during and post-pandemic, build a culture of public transportation, protect the environment, and cut down on traffic congestion while increasing Metro’s long-term transit ridership.”

The pilot program would provide fareless transit to students in elementary, middle and high schools, as well as community college students starting on August 1, 2021, and expand to include qualified low-income riders starting on January 1, 2022. The program would end on June 30, 2023 if not extended.

Free public transit will undoubtedly result in fewer car trips to LACCD campuses, producing fewer harmful emissions. It will also encourage more students to use public transit, forming environmentally healthy habits.

LACCD serves a diverse student body that includes many low-income communities with more than half of LACCD students living below the poverty line. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of LACCD students are low-income, so providing free transit for a year offers a meaningful impact on their family budgets and overall quality of life, making them more likely to thrive in their studies. This will put them on more equal footing with students across the state and country.

“At LACCD, we believe that transportation is an equity issue,” said LACCD Chancellor Francisco C. Rodriguez, PhD. “We urge the Metro Board of Directors to follow this recommendation and approve this program, which will close some of those gaps by allowing our students to get to class with less difficulty so more of their resources can be allocated to other essential items.”

LACCD students testified before the LA Metro Board of Directors multiple times this past year, urging the Board to consider initiating a fareless Metro system starting this fall when at least fifty percent (50%) of in-person instruction will commence following a year of remote learning as a result of the pandemic. LACCD Student Trustee Elias Geronimo de Leon helped organize his peers to testify, reminding the LA Metro Board of Directors that nearly seventy percent (70%) of

LACCD's student population are low-income and over fifty-one percent (51%) of LACCD students live below the poverty line.

“LACCD students currently pay \$160 a semester for an LA Metro U-Pass,” said Geronimo. “This is not affordable for many of us—particularly during these difficult economic times. We shouldn't have to choose between paying for our studies and other basic needs.”

Before the COVID-19 pause, only twenty-six percent (26%) of LACCD students reported using public transit. That is almost certainly due to the fact that more than half of the students who did use public transit said they had trouble paying for it. With the LACCD student transit pass pilot program reducing that cost to zero, it should lead to an increase in students choosing public transit which reduces the number of cars on the road and fumes in the air.

Students held a virtual rally organized by Move LA and LACCD on May 18 in preparation for today's LA Metro meeting. Several LACCD student leaders, LACCD Trustee Mike Fong and Chancellor Rodriguez spoke at the rally.

“We applaud the LA Metro staff for their recommendation to the Metro Board of Directors to approve the countywide student transit pass pilot program,” said Trustee Fong, Chair of the LACCD Legislative and Public Affairs Committee. “It is the right program at the right time, and a direct way to provide a real benefit to students who need it most.”

The Los Angeles Community College District has submitted a FY 2022 Senate Congressional Directed Spending Request to help offset some of the costs and to potentially extend the duration of the pilot program.

The LA Metro Board of Directors will make its final decision on May 27, 2021.

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About the Los Angeles Community College District

We are the Colleges of Los Angeles! LACCD (www.laccd.edu) is the nation's largest community college district, educating about 250,000 students annually at its nine colleges that serve the residents of more than 36 cities and communities from 900 square miles of Los Angeles County. Since 1969, the District has been providing an important learning pathway for students seeking transfer to four-year colleges or universities while also offering two-year degrees and certificated training programs to Southern California's diverse workforce in many specialized trades and professions. Follow us on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/LACCD>, @LACCD, and on Twitter, [@laccd](https://twitter.com/laccd) and Instagram, https://www.instagram.com/laccd_edu/ @laccd_edu.

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